



The Impact of Menthol and Flavored Tobacco on Youth

The human and economic costs of tobacco in Philadelphia is devastating

- In Philadelphia, tobacco kills more than 3,500 city residents each year, more than overdoses, gun homicides, alcohol, and physical inactivity combined.¹
- The average smoker loses 10 years of life expectancy due to tobacco use.²
- This burden is disproportionately borne by minority and low-income city residents.³
 - 26% of African-Americans in Philadelphia smoke vs 21% of whites.
 - 32% of Philadelphians with incomes below the poverty line smoke vs. 20% of non-poor city residents.
- The medical costs alone to treat illnesses caused by smoking in Philadelphia are over \$840 million.⁴ Even nonsmokers pay for these costs, through health insurance premiums or taxes for Medicare and Medicaid.
- 28% of Philadelphia's youth used some form of tobacco cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, or electronic vapor products in 2015.⁵

Tobacco flavorings put our youth at risk for initiating and continuing smoking.

- 90% of smokers start by age 18.⁶
- In 2014, 70% of teenagers who used tobacco reported using a flavored product within the past 30 days.⁷
- Cheap candy, fruit, and menthol flavored cigarillos are often packaged and sold in kid-friendly flavors and placed next to kid-orientated products that entice kids to start smoking
- While cigarette use declined from 9.6 % to 7.5%, Cigar use more than doubled among black youth from 2011 to 2013. From 2013 to 2015, the increase in cigar use was statistically significant⁸
- Menthol minimizes the harshness of smoke while increasing the likelihood of addiction.⁹
- Teens who start smoking with menthol products are twice as likely to become daily lifetime smokers.¹⁰



The tobacco industry relies on predatory marketing strategies in communities of color

- Menthol cigarette advertisements have exploited cultural traditions in African-American communities, including Black History Month, the Black Power movement, and hip-hop culture.
- A 2013 study showed that stores in majority black neighborhoods in Philadelphia were 74% more likely to have tobacco ads near children's products.¹¹
- Nationally, billboard ads in black neighborhoods are more likely than those in white neighborhoods to show menthol brands¹²
- Cigarette ads in *Ebony* are 10 times as likely to be for menthol than ads in *People*¹³
- Blacks teens reported more menthol cigarette use (71%) than non-Hispanic whites (51%) and Hispanics (52%)¹⁴
- 85% of black smokers but only 29% of white smokers smoke menthol cigarettes¹⁵



Support for a restriction on the sale of flavored tobacco is widespread, and several major cities have already taken action.

- New York City, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Providence all have restrictions on the sale of flavored tobacco products. Chicago's restrictions include a ban on menthol within 500 feet of high schools
- In 2011, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) concluded that the removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplace "*would benefit public health in the United States.*"¹⁶
- NAACP delegates adopted a resolution supporting efforts at the state and local levels to restrict the sale of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products, specifically citing Big Tobacco's well-documented history of targeting African-American communities.¹⁷



References

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- ³ Public Health Management Corporation Community Health Data Base's (2014/2015) Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey
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- ⁷ Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among Middle and High School Students — the United States, 2014 *MMWR* October 2, 2015 / 64(38);1066-1070. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6438a2.htm>.
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